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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceptions of non-traditional students at Chicago State University (CSU) regarding the special Board of Governors (BOG) Bachelor of Arts program designed to serve this population. The study population included about 450 present and former students of the BOG program. Of these, 25 graduates and 25 undergraduates were chosen at random. Questionnaires were distributed to these 50 participants and 37 were returned. Findings included the following: (1) 64 percent of CSU undergraduates want to graduate from CSU and 75 percent of graduates plan to go to graduate school; (2) graduates and undergraduates rated the BOG advisors and advisement process with an 80 percent approval rating; (3) most students did not feel they were treated differently than traditional students; and (4) over 65 percent of students surveyed felt that a social unit and mixer would help to promote the BOG program. Responses to a questionnaire section on a Prospective Student Seminar showed that 77 percent of students agreed that the seminar and handbook were informative and of good use. (Contains 6 tables and 13 references.) (JB)

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STUDENTS' EVALUATION OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS BACHELOR OF ARTS NON-TRADITIONAL DEGREE PROGRAM

John E. C. Porter

ED 363 184

The average student today differs from the average student 10 years ago. These new non-traditional students are over 25, some are single mothers or women and men in a career change, or just looking for advancement in their present job. In order for programs such as the Board of Governors program to assist non-traditional students in obtaining their educational goals, students' opinions and needs should be taken into account. There is literature and research on non-traditional programs and students' opinions. To help this program better serve its students, it is imperative to find out what students think. If students and research can help to make this program more in-tune to the needs of its students, it will increase the efficiency and student opinion of the program.

The student body composition on college and university campuses is changing. This new student body is comprised of culturally, racially and socially heterogeneous students, life-long learners, part-time students, and older students. Gilley and Hawkes (1989) states that between 1970 and 1985, the number of students age twenty-five or older enrolled in higher education

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institutions increased from 27.4% to 41.6%; minority enrollment increased from 12% in 1972 to 16% in 1982; female enrollments increased from 32% of total enrollments in 1950 to 53% in 1987. Part-time students accounted for only 32% of enrollments in 1970, but represented 42% of enrollments by 1987. These new non-traditional students have different lifestyles, needs and expectations than those of the traditional college student.

Even with this influx of non-traditional students, colleges and universities are in general doing little to accommodate this student population. Gilley and Hawkes (1989) also state that part-time students, adults, women, and minorities often feel like second-class citizens in the academic community where college policies and procedures, class scheduling, student life, and campus facilities are geared to serve traditional students. Some institutions crassly view their new students as "revenue generators" who are tolerated only because they help pay for facilities and activities. Ironically, most of these facilities and activities only alienate them further from the core of the academic enterprise.

Discrimination of non-traditional students can be seen all over the college community. Such things as charging part-time students more in tuition and fees than those assessed against full-time students. Many courses and programs are not scheduled for evenings or on week-ends. Other things such as parking fees which are not discounted for students who only come once or twice a week, and student activity fees which are spent predominately on programs and activities geared for traditional students discriminate against non-traditional students. Most all social life

tends to be centered around fraternities and sororities, and athletic activities which caters to traditional students.

In the research on college choice of the non-traditional student their reasons varied. Bers and Smith (1990) state that women frequently cited divorce or widowhood, or children going off to school or leaving home, as key events prompting them to return to school. Some said they recognized their jobs offered little mobility and they wished to prepare for a new career. Men were more likely to cite job-related factors, job changes or the need to obtain additional training. Personal and family-related reasons were not identified as critical factors by men. Hossler (1985) has identified three critical states: Predisposition in which the person makes a decision to attend college, Search wherein a person begins to seek information about colleges and narrows doing his/her alternatives, and Choice during which time the student considers alternatives and decides which college to attend.

Bers and Smith (1989) said that while these models of college choice may apply to the non-traditional student, virtually no empirical studies have been conducted and reported in literature to validate these models for non-traditional students. Bers and Smith (1988) also stated that the Search and Decision Processes. A major area to be addressed in this project was the identification of variables used by non-traditional students during their search for and decision to attend a given institution. It was surprising to learn that the non-traditional students in these focus groups did not report engaging in any of the sequential search processes and decision

activities suggested by the college-choice literature. Although non-traditional students don't follow Hossler's (1985) model, there are, however, certain college characteristics that influenced choice. Those characteristics are convenience (the primary reason) and affordable cost. Only a few mentioned that a specific program attracted them to a certain institution.

In studying the non-traditional student, also looked at was literature and research on non-traditional students in the classroom. In a study by Clark and Lynch (1992) they noted five challenges in teaching mixed-age classrooms. The challenges are feeling uncomfortable, the discomfort of the older student in the classroom setting, different orientation toward the professor, older students see the professors as a peer, whereas younger students see professors as unapproachable. Older students as authorities, younger students assumed older students to be authorities-not because of their expertise in the area but because of their age. Different learning styles, non-traditional students are motivated differently than traditional students, they prefer interactive learning. Finally, there is hostility between age groups. Both groups seem to view the other group as "having it easier."

Hu (1985) this group in general has identified items such as financial aid, part-time jobs, child care facility, public transportation, week-end classes and academic counseling to be important. Hu (1985) also listed eight reasons for attending college which were: (1) for education's sake, (2) required for current employment, (3) need academic credentials for career advancement, (4) keeping up with new knowledge, (5) currently unemployed and need training

for future employment opportunity, (6) for career change, (7) for expanding my social activities and, (8) others. Of the eight reasons stated most current students founded " career advancement" or "career change" as reasons why they were back in school. On the other hand, in addition to these two reasons, prospective students also considered "for education sake" and "keeping up with new technology" to be important. In light of rapidly changing technology and job requirement, these findings are not surprising and are very much in support of previous research results in this area.

Some possible changes as stated by Gilley and Hawkes (1989) are:

* Curricula must be flexible and incorporate more of the work and life experiences of different students. More study should relate to and acknowledge the value of the careers and experiences of adult students.
* Technology should be utilized to make the content of classes more accessible through video-tape and cable television.
* Scheduling patterns should be changed to offer a much greater variety of options.
* Tuition incentives can be used to encourage traditional-age students to take classes and programs at times and places convenient to non-traditional students.

* Learning evaluation should place increased value on team-work, group problem-solving, and creativity.
* Student life programs and activities should be altered to promote the new community.
* Intramural activities could be geared to a variety of interests and goals and could be scheduled to serve the community's needs.
* Other facets of life also should be integrated into the academic community.

Marlow (1989) states the number of non-traditional students will continue to increase on campuses nationwide. They are asking for and need new types of services. Studies of non-traditional students' needs on individual campuses can provide the student personnel administrator with a firm foundation for developing services and programs for this growing portion of the student population. Without such evidence, claims for services lack strength and can easily be dismissed as unsubstantial, particularly in these times of dwindling budgets.

The literature and research on non-traditional students does give adequate information on non-traditional students, needs and opinions. This information is part of the foundation from which an in-depth study of the non-traditional students at Chicago State University was done. The result of this study could be use to better relationships between non-traditional student and the rest of the college community.

Questions of the Study

1) What are the student's opinion of the BOG degree program as it is related to obtaining their educational goals?
2) Is the BOG program designed with the student's educational goals in mind?
3) Are there programs especially designed to assist the BOG student in adjusting to college life?
4) Are the BOG program advisors adequately trained to effectively assist students?
5) Does the BOG program effectively translate student needs into practices that assist the students into obtaining their educational goal with the least amount of stress?

Procedures

Population:

The population includes students and graduates of the BOG program, which includes around 450 present and former students. From this population 25 graduates and 25 undergraduates chosen at random.

Operational:

Students will view the BOG program as meeting their educational goals, more so than other programs, as measured by the Porter Survey of students opinions.

Method of Data Collection:

The questionnaire was distributed to the 50 graduate and undergraduate students of the BOG program. 37 questionnaires were returned, which represent 74%.

Instrument:

Porter's (1993) questionnaire entitled "Students' Opinion of BOG Program." The questionnaire entitled "Students' Opinion of BOG Program" is divided into five categories.

1) Brief personal background history of the students.
2) Students' views of the BOG program advisors.
3) Students' views of other departments and campus life as a non-traditional student,
4) Students' views of BOG educational services.
5) Students' views of BOG seminars.

There was a total of 26 statements. The first category contained six statements; the second category contained eight statements; the third category contained six statements; the fourth category contained three questions; the fifth category contained two questions. The final statement was an open statement which said, "Please make any additional comments about the BOG program."

Results

The findings were tabulated in percentages and the chi square test was employed in tables I-VI and their open-ended responses which are not listed in the tables.

The findings of the first section of the questionnaire showed that 64% of undergraduates want to graduate from Chicago State University, while 75% of graduates plan to go to graduate school (question 2). The average length of time in the program for both graduates and

undergraduates is one year, which represents 43% of the total population (question 3). There was no consensus choice on the reason for choosing the Board of Governors program (question 4). Undergraduates (100%) would recommend the program while only 92% of graduates would (question 5). As far as reaching their educational goals it was a consensus (100%) that they would (question 6).

The second section of the questionnaire covers the students views of the BOG advisors and advisement process. Their overall opinion rated the advisor and advisement process at an overall 80% approval rating. In the third section of the questionnaire covering the students' views of themselves in the program. The fourth question pertaining to the treatment of BOG students around campus. showed that the majority of BOG students do not feel as though they are treated any different than traditional students. The last two questions on the social aspect of the BOG program showed that over 65% of the students surveyed, felt that a social unit and mixer would help to promote the BOG program.

The fifth section on the Prospective Student Seminar showed that a majority of the students (77%), agreed that the Prospective Student Seminar and handbook were informative and of good use. Some of the replies to the open-ended statements were "very good program", "I really haven't applied myself", "great program", "good program for those who prefer flexibility in their education", and "BOG program was helpful in helping me attaining my personal goals." Some other comments made were "the BOG program is an outstanding program", "my advisor

has helped me to make a difficult transfer feasible", "the advisors are excellent",

The population of this study did not voice the same opinions as those given in Gilley and Hawkes (1989) on feeling like second-class citizens in the academic community where college policies and procedures, class scheduling, student life, and campus facilities are geared to serve traditional students. The majority of the surveyed population stated that they felt no different than traditional students. The five challenges in teaching mixed-age classrooms noted in Clark and Lynch's (1992) study were not seen or perceived as problems by the studied population. Hu (1985) listed eight reasons for non-traditional students attending school; the top three reasons were: (1) for education's sake, (2) required for current employment, and (3) need academic credentials for career advancement. This study lists as its top three reasons as: (1) credit for work/life experience, (2) a tie between acceptance of all transfer credit, and (3) ability to focus in different areas. Gilley and Hawkes (1989) listed some possible changes to assist the non-traditional students. None of the changes listed in Gilley and Hawkes (1989) were cited in the survey. The literature that was reviewed, for the most did give some incite into the problems faced by non-traditional students. Although many of these problem did not surface in the survey they are still a problems that must be faced.

The findings of this survey could be used by the Board of Governors program to assist the non-traditional students. A larger more extensive survey should be done to determine exactly how to better serve and recruit the non-traditional student, without further studies and more sensitivity training for advisors and others who interact with the non-traditional students.

TABLE I

Personal Background History

		A				B				Total			
		25				12							
		A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
1.	Student Status												
2.	Long range university plan:	65%	8%	4%	24%	25%			75%	51%	5%	3%	41%
3.	How long in BOG Program:	52%	28%	8%	12%	25%	33%	8%	33%	48%	30%	8%	19%
4.	What was your major reason for choosing the BOG Program:	32%	24%	28%	16%	17%	33%	42%	8%	27%	27%	32%	14%
5.	Would you recommend BOG to someone else:	100%				92%	8%			97%	3%		
6.	Is the BOG Program helping you to reach your educational goal:	100%				100%				100%			

TABLE II

Students' View of BOG Advisors and Advisement Process

	UG #25				G #12			
	A	B	C	D	A	B	C	D
7. Access to advisors is:	72%	24%	4%	0%	34%	50%	8%	8%
8. The Board of Governors advisement process is:	60%	32%	8%	0%	33%	50%	17%	0%
9. The Board of Governors advisors are:	64%*	28%	8%	0%	33%	42%	8%	17%

A: agree, B: disagree, C: no comment

	A	B	C	A	B	C
10. The BOG advisors are knowledgeable about BOG program requirements:	96%*	0%	4%	83%*	0%	17%
11. The BOG advisors consider me as just a student:	24%	56%	20%	25%	58%	17%
12. The BOG advisors help to make college life easier:	84%*	0%	16%	58%	34%	8%
13. Do BOG advisors keep you up to date on your academic requirements:	88%*	0%	12%	50%	42%	8%
14. The BOG advisors informed me of graduation requirement.	92%	0%	28%	50%	33%	17%

* Significant at the .05 level of confidence

TABLE III

Students' view of other departments and campus life:	A = Yes, B = No, C = Comment					
	A	B	C	A	B	C
15. In class do you feel any different being a Board of Governors student:	8%	92%*	0%	0	100%*	0
16. Do teachers treat BOG students different than traditional students:	8%	80%	12%	17%	83%	0%
17. Do other students treat BOG students different:	8%	92%	0%	17%	83%	0%
18. Do other departments on campus treat BOG students different:	16%	68%*	16%	25%	50%	25%
19. The BOG should have a social unit that included the alumni and its current students:	60%*	12%	28%	75%	8%	17%
20. A social mixer of students, faculty alumni, and stall would help promote the BOG Program:	76%*	8%	16%	84%*	8%	8%

Significant at the .05 level of confidence:

TABLE IV

Students' View of BOG Educational Services

	A	B	C	A	B	C
21. The Portfolio Option of the program was of use to me:	32%	68%*	0%	42%	58%	0%
22. The Portfolio assessment of my work life experience was fair:	24%	28%	48%	25%	17%	58%
23. The Portfolio Development Workshop explained the portfolio process:	48%	0%	52%	67%	8%	25%

TABLE V

Students' View of BOG Seminar

	A	B	C	A	B	C
24. The Prospective Student Seminar was informative:	80%*	0%	20%	84%*	8%	8%
25. The booklet given during the Prospective Student Seminar was of good use:	72%*	0%	28%	75%	8%	17%

Significant at .05 level of confidence.

TABLE VI

Overall Opinion

	A.	B.	C.	D.
2.	51%	5%	3%	41%
3.	43%	30%	8%	19%
4.	27%	27%	32%	14%
5.	97%	3%	0%	0%
6.	*100%			
7.	*59%	32%	6%	3%
8.	51%	38%	11%	
9.	54%	32%	8%	5%
10.	92%		8%	
11.	24%	57%	19%	
12.	75%	11%	14%	
13.	75%	14%	11%	
14.	78%	11%	11%	
15.	5%	95%		
16.	11%	81%	8%	
17.	11%	89%		
18.	19%	62%	19%	
19.	65%	11%	24%	
20.	78%	8%	14%	
21.	35%		65%	
22.	24%	24%	52%	
23.	54%	*13%	43%	
24.	81%	*13%	16%	
25.	73%	*13%	24%	

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